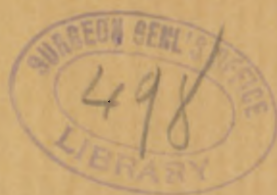


LEITCHWORTH (W^m P.)

Poorhouse Construction.



The State Board of Charities.

PAPER ON POORHOUSE CONSTRUCTION.

By Commissioner WM. P. LETCHWORTH.



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STATE OF NEW YORK.

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1891.

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POORHOUSE CONSTRUCTION.

By Commissioner LETCHWORTH.

[A paper read at the State Convention of Superintendents of the Poor, held at Lockport, N. Y., August 12-14, 1890.]

In the rural counties of the State of New York, public authorities have provided, for the care of paupers, fifty-six institutions designated as poorhouses ; and in the cities of the State, six similar establishments called almshouses. The former are under the direction of county Superintendents of the Poor, and the latter are governed by local boards of commissioners, which have the same general powers as Superintendents of the Poor in counties, and usually certain special powers and duties granted or imposed by the special acts creating them.

The number of paupers in the poorhouses and almshouses of the State on the 1st of November, 1889, as shown by the Twenty-third Annual Report of the State Board of Charities, was 20,749. The proper care and supervision of so large a number of dependent persons is a subject of great importance, whether considered in the light of our obligations to humanity or as a question of economy. It has been demonstrated that, in the administration of public relief, the greatest economy is attained when the interests of humanity are best subserved. If the disabled poor are surrounded with unexceptionable sanitary conditions, and at the same time provided with skillful medical service and furnished with a proper diet, the curable sick are sooner restored to health and self-support, and many of the chronic infirm are brought to a condition of partial usefulness while

under institutional care. The restoration to health of a dependent member of society not only lessens the public burden, but the wealth of the body politic is increased to the extent of the value of his labor. Therefore, in the establishment of a poorhouse all those means which tend to restore or benefit health should be brought into requisition.

When it becomes apparent in any community that a new building is necessary for the care of the poor, or that an old one should be remodeled, the attention of intelligent and public-spirited citizens should be directed to the subject, in order that the best results may be attained and the public interests protected; otherwise, through lack of information and consequent indifference, selfish schemes may dominate and the public good be sacrificed.

In the selection of a site for a poorhouse it has not infrequently happened that one has been chosen in some out-of-the-way place, difficult to reach, and having a very poor quality of land. Such a selection is usually made because of the cheapness of the land, and is the worst possible economy. The result is an increased cost of support and a lower dietary standard. In such cases there is less variety of farm and garden products, the keeper in charge soon becomes discouraged in futile efforts to make productive the barren soil, and the administration within doors suffers from the unsatisfactory and dreary look of things without. On the other hand, I have observed that, where a selection had been made of a goodly-sized tract of productive land, having a warm, loamy soil, pleasant to till, plenteousness abounded. Not only did the fields show heavy crops, but there was an abundance of fruits common to the climate and every delicacy a good garden could produce; while the large and comfortable barns and stables betokened the wisdom of the founders of the institution. Under such circumstances, it will be found that the keeper, instead of being soured and disheartened, has a hopeful look, and reflects in his countenance the thrift and prosperity of his surroundings. A poorhouse of ordinary size should have a farm of from 150 to 200

acres of land. A site must be chosen having a pure atmosphere. It is also essential that there should be a bountiful supply of pure water.

The institution should be situated so as to be conveniently accessible, in order that it may be more frequently visited by the benevolent and those specially interested in the care of the poor. Where such visitations are frequent, a faithful and intelligent official comes sooner to be appreciated, a stronger public interest is maintained in the institution, its needs are better understood, and appropriations to meet them are more likely to be granted readily by the board of supervisors.

After a site has been purchased, no expenditures should be made in the direction of building until the whole property has been surveyed, a map made of it, and the location fixed, not only of present, but of future, buildings. When it becomes necessary to erect any new building or buildings on the grounds of an old poorhouse, if a map has not already been made of the premises, one should be prepared from an accurate survey. The map should show the farm and grounds immediately surrounding the poorhouse, also the location of all the buildings, including the most trivial, and the floor plans of each. It should also show the location of all sewers, drains, and water and other pipes. From thenceforth, all extensions and improvements should be made on a general plan in accordance with principles governing the building and arrangement of these institutions, so that the incongruities and inconveniences that have originated in consequence of not having followed a general plan from the outset may be overcome as much as possible.

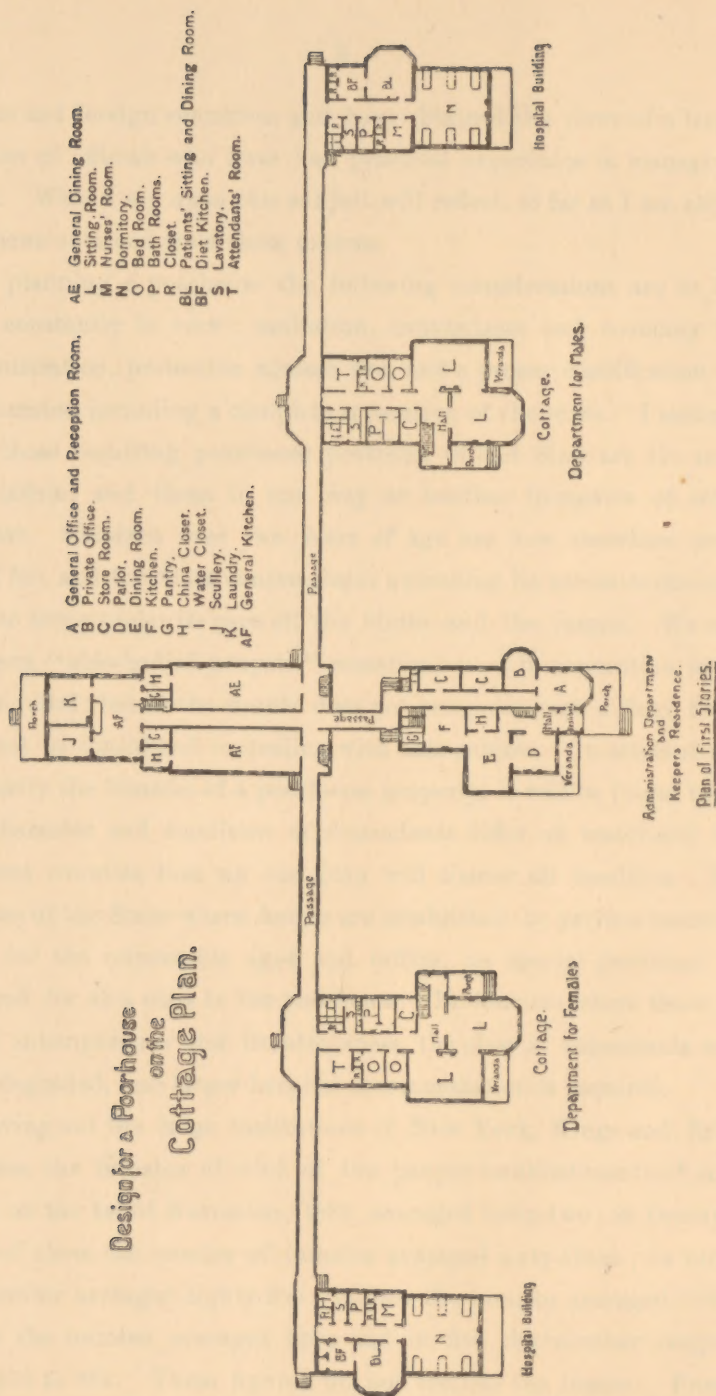
Poorhouse architecture has received less attention than that of almost any other class of public buildings, and it is difficult, if not impracticable, to find poorhouses or almshouses that meet the entire approval of the officials superintending them. During the past sixteen years I have critically examined many of these institutions

in this and foreign countries, and have obtained the views of a large number of officials who have had practical experience in managing them. What I say upon this subject will reflect, so far as I am able, the views obtained from these sources.

In planning a poorhouse the following considerations are to be kept constantly in view: sanitation, convenience and economy in administration, protection against fire, and a proper classification of the inmates, including a complete separation of the sexes. I assume that those requiring poorhouse provision in this State are the sick and infirm, and those in one way or another incapable of self-support. Children over two years of age are now elsewhere provided for, and the State contemplates extending its accommodations so as to bring under its care all the idiotic and the insane. We see the term "able-bodied paupers" sometimes used in connection with public relief; but as the statute does not recognize such a class, they will not be considered in dealing with this subject. In attempting to classify the inmates of a poorhouse properly, it will be found that the character and condition of dependents differ so materially in different counties that no one plan will answer all localities. In sections of the State where homes are established by private benevolence for the respectable aged and infirm, no special provision is required for this class in the poorhouse. In districts where there is much intemperance and licentiousness, the class of dependents are more degraded, and larger hospital accommodation is required.

Leaving out the large institutions of New York, Kings and Erie counties, the inmates of nine of the pauper establishments of the State, on the 1st of November, 1889, averaged forty-two; in twenty-three of them the number of inmates averaged sixty-three; in nine the number averaged eighty-five; in four the number averaged 109; in five the number averaged 140; and in five the number ranged from 154 to 262. These figures do not include the insane. From these averages it will be seen that if we take into account the con-

Design for a Poorhouse on the Cottage Plan.



tugency of an occasional increase over the average number, a poorhouse to accommodate from eighty to one hundred inmates is oftener required in this State than one larger or smaller. The fluctuation of numbers incident to a poorhouse population ought not to be overlooked, and buildings of sufficient capacity should be provided to meet emergencies.

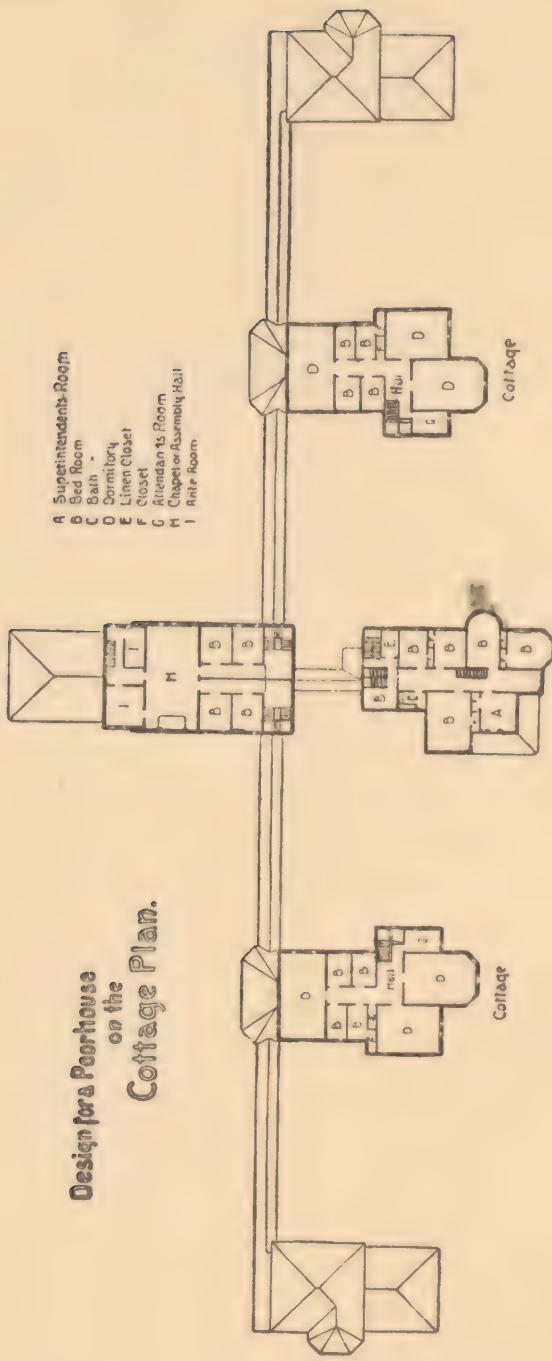
The plan of a poorhouse that I present, in the elaboration of which I have been voluntarily assisted by Mr. George J. Metzger, architect, of Buffalo, is designed to accommodate eighty inmates, and illustrates, it is believed, many of the general principles that should enter into the construction of buildings used for this purpose. The plan may be enlarged in certain of its departments, that is to say, in the general dining-rooms, dayrooms and dormitories, so as to accommodate one hundred inmates. The style of architecture is unpretentious and domestic. The central, or administration building, has more the appearance of a substantial dwelling-house than of an institution. It contains the office, reception-room, storerooms and apartments of the keeper, including the family dining-room, kitchen and bathroom. In the rear of this building, and connected with it by covered ways, are the dining-rooms — the men's to the right and the women's to the left. On the second floor are several apartments, one of which is designed for an assembly room or chapel. Another may be used for a women's workroom. Back of the dining-rooms is the general kitchen, from which both dining-rooms are supplied through the serving-rooms. In the rear of the kitchen is the laundry, etc. At the right of the central building is a cottage for men, and on the left, one for women. One of the rooms in each of these cottages is designed for a night attendant. The cottages are connected with the administration department by covered ways, which may be constructed so that glazed sash or closed blinds may be added in winter if desired. These covered ways afford pleasant walks for the aged and convales-

cent. As one of the principles entering into this plan of construction is, that the upper floors of the buildings are mainly designed for night use and the lower for day use, these covered ways, or corridors, should not in any case be more than one story in height. Being lightly constructed, they may readily be removed in case of fire, by the apparatus usually provided for such an emergency. Beyond the cottage on the right, is a one-story hospital* for men, and beyond the cottage on the left is a similar one for women. They have each a diet kitchen and a nurse's room. Unless what are strictly termed hospital cases are numerous, the hospital, or infirmary buildings, may be placed in the rear of the men's and women's cottages and so connected therewith that the light will not be shut out from the halls. A detached workshop for men should be placed in the rear of the men's cottage. The barns, stables, and other outbuildings are not shown, as their location depends somewhat on the plan upon which the vegetable garden, orchards, and farm tract are laid out. By separating the buildings, as shown in the plan, the entire institution is less liable to destruction by fire than if it were built in one block on the congregate plan, and the rooms may be better ventilated and better lighted by the sun, which helps to warm the apartments receiving its rays, and at the same time promotes health. While anything like elaborate ornamentation should be avoided and simplicity and economy observed, nevertheless, there should be a variety of outline and a harmony in the various parts in keeping with good taste and creating a pleasing general effect. It is desirable to avoid those hard and formal lines which suggest at first sight a pauper institution. If we begin with the interior and adjust the various parts to the

* In relation to hospital construction and the erection of buildings for contagious diseases, and to means and methods of properly caring for the sick, a very useful little book entitled "Handbook for Hospital Visitors" has been published by the State Charities Aid Association of New York City, and I would recommend that every one charged with the care of the dependent sick or infirm should secure a copy of it.



Design for a Poorhouse on the Cottage Plan.



- A Superintendents Room
- B Bed Room
- C Bath
- D Dormitory
- E Linen Closet
- F Closet
- G Attendants Room
- H Chapel or Assembly Hall
- I Recreation Room

Cottage

Keepers Residence

Plan of Second Stories

Cottage

needs of the inmates and the necessities of convenient administration, the exterior will naturally present varied and pleasing outlines. It seems to me that we should build our country poorhouses so that they may have, as far as practicable, the character of real homes. Whatever material may be used and whatever the plan and style of building adopted, true economy will be reached by building well and requiring that everything be done in a workmanlike manner.

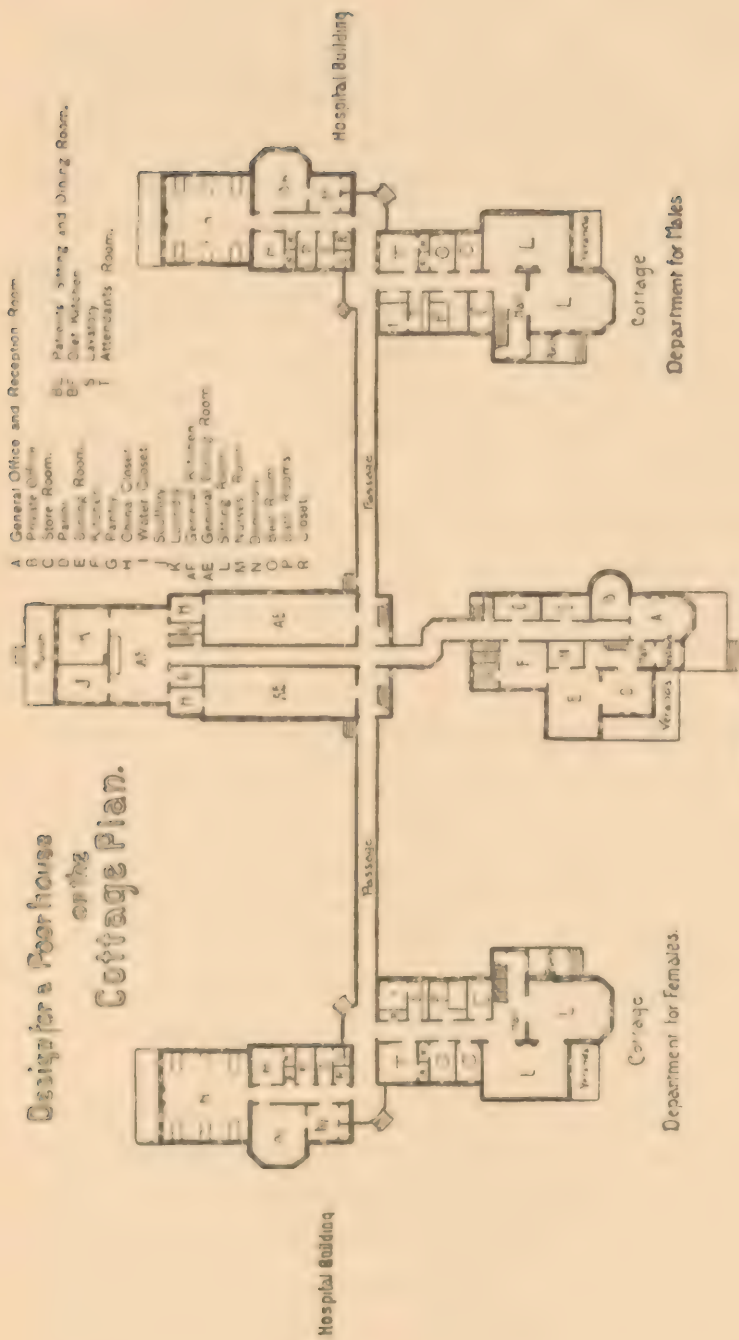
In locating buildings it should be seen that the situation is dry, the ground free from secret springs, and the spot sufficiently elevated to afford good drainage. It is desirable to place them so as to secure sunlight as far as practicable in all parts of the buildings at some period of the day. They should also be placed so as to afford plenty of lawn space in front of them.

The best material for building, all things considered, is doubtless brick. If the buildings are made of wood, more satisfactory results as to warmth and strength and perfectness of the work will be reached, by jointing the edges of all rough studding, joists and timbers at the mill, and surfacing one side of the boards used for sheathing; by covering the studding within and without with these boards laid diagonally and strongly nailed, and by laying a covering of good sheathing paper underneath the clapboards. On the inside sheathing should be nailed strips of vertical lath upon which the horizontal lath should be nailed. If mortar of proper consistency is used, it will clinch under the lath against the sheathing, and in this way a warm and firm wall will be secured. A wooden building constructed in this manner, supported on a substantial and dry foundation, and kept well painted, will prove more durable than brick. Stone buildings for poorhouses are not desirable on account of their liability to dampness, which can not be overcome without increased cost in construction.

Buildings containing so many sick and infirm should not exceed two stories in height. In case of fire, egress is more difficult, and

the cost of supervision is greater. The difference in the expense of constructing a two-story building and one that is higher is not so great as one would at first suppose, notwithstanding the cost of the roof is the same for both, because the substructure for a building exceeding two stories is more expensive than it is for a two-story one. The higher a building is carried the more it is exposed to the wind, which takes hold of it as at the end of a lever, bringing greater strain upon the various parts, thus requiring greater strength throughout. The outer walls of brick buildings should have an air-chamber within them, or be so constructed by the use of hollow brick as not to be liable to dampness. There should be numerous flues for ventilation, with registers in the rooms, both near the ceiling and the floor. The chimneys in all cases should have their foundations on the ground, and be carefully laid. In a building of brick the partition walls should, as far as practicable, be laid in the cellar and extend to the attic. In this way the structure will be better protected against fire, and it will be stronger. The floors should be constructed so as to deaden sound and be slow in burning in case of fire. Hall, dining-room, dayroom, kitchen and other floors that are much used should be of maple or other hard wood or genuine Georgia pine. All stairs should be of good width, with low risers, broad treads, and plain, strong balusters. Square landings are also highly desirable. Easy stairs have much to do with the comfortable use of such buildings and the safety of the inmates. Both the upper and the lower window sashes should be made to raise and lower by means of weights, cords and pulleys. Over the doors of the day and sleeping rooms it is advisable to place adjustable glazed sash. Convenient outside iron stairways, with wooden treads and platform landings, should be provided for the second stories of the buildings, as a means of escape in case of fire. The stairways and platforms should have railings and be accessible through doors opening outward.

Design for a Poor House or the Cottage Plan.



Plan showing different location of Hospital Buildings
First Stories.

In dormitories where there are numerous beds there should be not less than fifty superficial feet of floor-space to each bed. This is the minimum fixed by some standard authorities when the ceilings are twelve feet high. For an ordinary poorhouse the ceilings ought not to be higher than this nor less than ten feet. In many of our public buildings the ceilings are too high. In order to secure the requisite amount of air-space it is better to increase the superficial feet of the floor than to have very high ceilings. While it is important to provide sufficient floor-space in single rooms, not more than a liberal allowance should be given; otherwise, when the institution is crowded, an abuse will creep in by placing two beds in rooms designed only for one. As to the amount of air-space required in a hospital, authorities greatly differ. It is safe to say that, with the most perfect arrangements possible for ventilation, there should be more than double the quantity per bed that is necessary for each inmate in an associate dormitory.

Ample provision for open fires, especially in the hospital department, is highly desirable. They are valuable auxiliaries to ventilation, and promote health and cheerfulness. In brick buildings the wall flues may communicate with incombustible ducts or flues in the cellar, so arranged as to convey the foul air in the various rooms above to the central chimney, and thus ventilate the whole establishment; or, the foul air may be carried to a special stack warmed by hot steam coils within its top, and thus accomplish the same purpose.

Supplementing the open fires, the buildings may be economically heated by steam, generated at a central point and carried in pipes through the cellar and passages under the covered ways to the different departments, where the heat may be distributed by direct or indirect radiation. Whether steam, hot water, or hot-air furnaces are used, the air supplied from the outside should be taken from some distance above the ground. The system of heating should be such

as to afford a plentiful supply of heat whenever needed. If steam be used there must be ample boiler capacity, which is seldom provided. Many of the inmates of a poorhouse have feeble circulation, and consequently require more artificial warmth than persons in vigorous health. If a general heating apparatus be used it may be placed beneath the laundry. It is desirable that the room containing it should be vaulted with brick, as also the cellars adjoining, all of which should be amply provided with ventilating flues. It will be advantageous to have two boilers, so that in case it is necessary to repair one of them the other can be brought into requisition. If steam is used for cooking, a small additional upright boiler with pump is thought by some to be desirable.

Where a natural head of water cannot be obtained, and it is not intended to maintain a constant pressure of steam sufficient for the use of a steam force-pump in case of fire, a water-tower may be erected of sufficient height to distribute water over the highest part of any building. This tower may form a part of one of the principal buildings, or may be separate from it. For ordinary purposes, tanks may be placed in the attics of one or more of the principal buildings, but these will not afford ample protection in case of fire. The water should be elevated by means of a steam-pump. Windmills have frequently been tried in connection with a water supply : but, so far as I can learn, they have proved unsatisfactory investments, and have usually been superseded by steam. All cheap devices for conveying and distributing water should be discarded. The capacity of the tanks will be regulated by the amount of water used and by the intervals between times of raising steam. If steam is not used for cooking, these intervals in summer will of course be longer than otherwise, and larger tanks will be required.

A common mistake is to use, at the outset, a very small main water-pipe. I have known of instances where an inch pipe had been tried for this purpose. For an ordinary country poorhouse the main

supply pipe ought to be of cast-iron and not less than three inches in diameter. The socket joints should be sealed with lead, and the pipe laid in a graded trench below all possibilities of frost. When we reflect that it is of vital importance to have an abundance of water in institutions of this kind, both for purposes of cleanliness and as a protection against fire, the additional expense of using a large instead of a small pipe is an insignificant matter, especially as the cost of digging a trench is no greater in the one case than the other.

Hydrants, with a sufficient supply of hose to meet the emergency of fire, should be placed at proper distances from the buildings and on the floors of the principal buildings. Conveniently at hand in the different departments there should be a place where buckets may be hung, to be used only in case of fire.

Where sewage can be discharged into a copious stream, or into any large body of water without polluting it to the detriment of those using it, this is the least expensive and least troublesome way of disposing of it. Where this cannot be done, the dry-closet system can be adopted, in which case means should be provided for drying and storing in summer an ample supply of earth for the year. The earth may be dried in vats with movable covers, such as are used in making salt by solar evaporation. It can then be shoveled into a cheap, close structure alongside of the vats. If earth-closets are used, it will be well to project them from the buildings and connect them therewith by short passage-ways having cross-ventilation. Another plan of disposing of sewage, but a more expensive one, is that of collecting it in a series of vats so placed that the overflow of one passes into a second and from that into a third, whence the liquid is discharged into a stream, or distributed over the surrounding land and absorbed therein. The solid matter which is left is intermixed with ashes or other material, and is used as a fertilizer on the land.

All the necessary facilities for maintaining cleanliness must be supplied, especially in respect to proper arrangements for bathing. The bathrooms should be made comfortably warm and supplied with cold and hot water, the latter being under the sole control of attendants. A separate department in the laundry, or at least separate provision for washing clothes that come from the hospital wards, is imperatively necessary. In addition to means for drying clothes in the laundry, there ought to be yard facilities to accomplish the same object out-of-doors when the weather permits.

A high degree of order should be observed in these institutions, and this can be satisfactorily attained only when made a matter of consideration in the construction and arrangement of the buildings. Plenty of closet room conveniently situated and abundance of storage space are important. A roomy place for keeping the clothes and property of the inmates separate from the property of the county is desirable. No excuse should be found for lumbering up the rooms of paupers with their old clothes, sacks, trunks, etc.

Respecting basements in county poorhouses, my observations have led me to the conclusion, that the evils resulting from the use of them have been so great, that these places should be emphatically condemned. I have never yet found a poorhouse basement that, at certain seasons of the year, *was not damp and mouldy, the beaded moisture sometimes trickling down the walls. In some of our older poorhouses may still be found in the basements, single rooms or cells which were formerly occupied by the inmates. These damp, unwholesome places were at one time a source of abuse and a cause for just complaint. A laundry in the basement is particularly objectionable. Whatever may be the arrangement for ventilation, the vapors and offensive odors from this department will, to a greater or less extent, creep upwards and extend through the building. If a basement be provided, we have virtually a three-story building, with the piping and ventilating shafts in the way

on the bottom floor, and inconvenience and increased cost of administration resulting from additional stairways. Of these, for a class so enfeebled as poorhouse inmates, there should be as few as possible. In the country districts at least, where land is cheap, there is no necessity nor excuse for basements, and I think we should regard it as a fundamental principle in building poorhouses, that they should be so planned in the beginning, that basement floors can not afterwards be converted into living apartments or workrooms, should the institution become overcrowded. In place of basements there should be good cellars, and these should be used solely for the necessary pipes and air-ducts and for the storing of coal and other imperishable materials. Arrangements for keeping fruits and vegetables elsewhere than under the living part of any of the buildings are essential. The noxious exhalations that arise from decaying vegetables are so subtle, yet dangerous, that supplies subject to decay should be stored where they can do no harm.

On the grounds of every public institution, it is well to provide a yard with a close board fence where all unsightly material may be stored. Some shed room in this yard is desirable, and if it can be arranged so that the workshop will connect directly with the yard it will be more convenient.

A pleasant indoor workroom for women, and for the men a well-lighted workshop, where tools may be repaired and certain kinds of indoor work carried on, are indispensable. It should be a cardinal principle in poorhouse management that every inmate must render, as far as he is capable, some kind of service to the county. This much is due the public, and the welfare of the beneficiary is thereby promoted. No sadder sight can be found than that of idle people in a poorhouse sitting in a row with folded hands, an exemplification of living death. With nothing to engage their minds and thrown back on sorrowful reminiscences, it is but natural that they should

become dejected, fretful and querulous. If the ability to labor is a matter left to the judgment of the attending physician, it will be found that many industries can be carried on and much more work performed than is generally supposed. Not infrequently a carpenter will be found who can be made very useful at odd jobs, a tailor who can repair old clothes and make plain garments, or a shoemaker who can repair the shoes of the inmates. Light work may sometimes be improvised which will benefit those employed, though not affording much, if any, pecuniary profit. By the practice of a little ingenuity on the part of those in charge and the giving of slight rewards for services performed, many, if not most, of the infirm women may be induced to undertake light tasks, such as sewing, knitting, patchwork, preparing and sewing carpet rags, etc., and the men may be led to perform light work in the garden and the fields. One of the best systems of poorhouse industries that I have seen in this country was at the Oswego city almshouse, where, on a summer's day, nearly all of the adult male inmates were employed, some weeding or hoeing in the garden, some picking up stones in the fields, whither they had been conveyed in wagons, while the women within doors were seemingly all doing something. All appeared contented and interested in their work. On one of my visits to the Monroe county almshouse a few years since, where the necessity of employing the inmates is well understood, Superintendent McGonegal had among his workers a considerable number of men engaged in making wooden skewers, which he exchanged with his butcher for meat. For the purpose of extending employment in winter, I have known of sheds being erected, which were comfortably warmed, and in which such of the men as could do some work were required to break a certain amount of stone daily. This arrangement greatly reduced the number of inmates in the poorhouse. When a pauper finds that he must, to the extent of his ability, render compensation for his support, though required to do

but little, he frequently becomes disgusted with poorhouse life and will manage to earn an independent living.

One of the great evils in our poorhouse system grows out of an incomplete separation of the sexes. In the investigation made into the causes of pauperism by the State Board of Charities, pursuant to a concurrent resolution of the Senate and Assembly of 1873, it was found that many families of hereditary paupers had sprung from marriages consequent upon acquaintanceship formed between debased persons while inmates of the poorhouses. There are other serious evils springing from this source to which it is needless to refer. I am clearly of the opinion that poorhouses should be so planned that separation of the sexes does not depend upon the administration, but is absolute from the internal construction and arrangement of the buildings. Means should also be provided for classifying the inmates, as far as practicable, according to their peculiar mental and physical condition. Separate rooms ought to be provided for certain of the respectable and worthy poor, who are sometimes compelled in their old age to seek refuge in the poorhouse. It does not seem right to force this class into constant and intimate association with the degraded and mischievous. In the plan presented a complete separation of the sexes is effected, and classification of the inmates may still further be maintained by inclosing the yards in the rear of the men's and women's departments with suitable fences.

A room in which religious services may be conducted ought to form a part of every poorhouse. To some inmates the opportunity for divine worship is necessary to their peace of mind, and it certainly should not be denied to any. Upon all, its influence is beneficial, and is helpful in the preservation of orderly deportment and good discipline.

After the buildings are completed the grounds should be properly graded, care being taken to keep the good soil on the surface, also to

see that there is a quick descent for a little distance on all sides of the building. The grounds should be planted with a limited number of clean-leaved, large-growing shade trees. These should not be planted so near the buildings as to shade them or obstruct the free entrance into them of sunlight, or prevent the circulation of fresh air. In the treatment of grounds a few flowers are admissible, as they give pleasure to the families of the officers and to the better class of inmates; but a superfluity of them should be avoided, for they require more or less attention, and are likely to be neglected at certain seasons. Fine patriarchal trees affording refreshing shade, and a broad, green, well-kept lawn are a good set-off to the plainest buildings, and give satisfaction to every beholder. A grove or belt of evergreens planted in the quarter from which come prevailing winds will prove not only a protection in winter, but a pleasant retreat in summer. In laying out the grounds and mapping the farm, an extensive orchard with the best kind of fruit should not be overlooked, as also a large vegetable garden convenient to the buildings, through which might be laid a pleasant center walk bordered with flowers.

The barns and stables should be rearward from the men's side of the institution, and the men's side should be towards the town, or the side by which the buildings are generally approached, in order to secure greater seclusion for the women inmates. Too little attention is usually paid to the matter of providing good buildings on poor-house farms for the storage of grain and fodder, for the proper care of stock in winter, for the preservation of farm machinery and tools and for the storing of vegetables and fruit. In some of the populous and wealthy counties in the State, the out-buildings would be a disgrace to any thrifty farmer, and yet they remain in their unimproved, unpainted, sometimes ruinous condition from year to year, a standing monument to the parsimony of the county authorities.

I have thus briefly referred to some of the leading principles which may be useful in planning and constructing new poorhouses and in improving old ones, but the subject is one deserving more extended treatment than time and the occasion will permit.

In closing, I must refer to an evil that has a most disheartening influence on this subject. It is one that closely affects the public interests, and it should be the duty of every citizen to strive to correct it. However careful we may be in selecting suitable sites for poorhouses, however judiciously we may plan and construct them, unless their affairs are well administered, this careful preliminary work is of no avail. The position of a superintendent of the poor is one of great responsibility, both in relation to the expenditures of a county and the true interests of the poor. Only such persons as are best qualified for the position should be selected to fill it, and when selected they should be retained in office as long as they satisfactorily discharge their duties. A business man or a corporation, in employing an agent for a difficult and responsible position, takes great pains to secure a person in every way competent to fill the place. This agent, with each year's experience, becomes more valuable to his employer, and is an important factor in the success of the enterprise with which he is connected. But with an officer of the poor, it matters not how suitable a man may be chosen for the place or how faithfully and efficiently he may discharge his duties, after a few years at most a demand is frequently made for a change, simply because the incumbent has profited by the salary long enough, and now some one else ought to have it as a compensation for political services. I believe in political organization, but hold that the aims of such should be to promote the highest public good. No business man would discharge an efficient and experienced employee on the grounds upon which we supplant a tried and faithful public officer. Should we not adopt in this important branch of the public service what is considered a

cardinal principle in conducting ordinary business affairs? The result of our present policy is that, when a man enters upon the duties of his office, except the reward of an approving conscience, there is no inducement for him to put forth his best efforts or to encourage him in well-doing. However earnestly he may labor to make his administration successful, he knows that at the end of his term another may take his place, and that improvements which he would otherwise undertake might not be carried out by his successor. He therefore naturally feels less concern in poorhouse affairs, and while intending to discharge his duty, is satisfied if he thinks he earns his salary. Instead of exercising his mental faculties to the utmost to promote the public welfare, he is tempted to use the opportunity his office affords to further his personal aims. Until this policy is set aside and business principles adopted in the management of our poorhouses, we cannot look for that high standard of administration which ought to govern these institutions.

